

Кюстендилски регион

Kyustendil Region

Kjustendiler Region



KYUSTENDIL REGION

AN OVERVIEW CULTURAL-TOURIST ROUTE



KYUSTENDIL – NEVESTINO – SAPAREVA BANYA – RILA – RILA MONASTERY – BOBOSHEVO – KYUSTENDIL

The three-day tour focuses on important architectural, artistic and historical monuments of culture from 7th century B.C. until present day. The main tour offers the opportunity to make alternative thematic itineraries of educational, religious and scientific nature.



The starting point is the town of Kyustendil. The first day the tourists visit the sites which are part of the National architectural and archeological reserve „Pautalia, Velbazhd, Kyustendil“. The ancient history of the town and the region is displayed in the Archeological exhibition. The abundance of objects (from 7th century B.C. - 14th century) attracts the tourists' attention and raise their interest for the next stages of the tour. In order to get the idea of what the Pautalia Asclepion was like, the tourists should visit the ancient therms (baths) from 2nd-3rd centuries, which cover a territory of 3000 sq.m., and are one of the symbols of present-day Kyustendil. The existence of curative mineral water springs is the reason why Kyustendil has existed as a town for two thousand years in a row, has been an administrative, economic and spiritual centre and has been famous as a resort for emperors and military leaders. Just off the therms lies the Pirkova Tower (14th-15th centuries) which was a fortification tower in the medieval town of Velbuzhd. Another landmark in the town is the fortress situated on the Hisarlaka Hill. Here among the ruins and magnificent nature, the tourists will be absorbed in the atmosphere of past events. This place is provided with well-maintained alleys and spots where one can sit down and relax or eat.

St. George Church from the 12th century, which is situated in the Kolusha residential district, is by far the pearl of the medieval architectural and art heritage. If the tourist group is interested in the history of the Christian religion and art, they can visit the temples Uspenie Bogorodichno, St. Dimitar and St. Mina dating back to the Bulgarian National Revival period. For those interested in ancient history, an observation of archeological excavation in Kyustendil could be organised.





The tour focuses on sites connected with the more contemporary history of the town and its present day rhythm. Anyone will be delighted to see the works of the great artist Vladimir Dimitrov – The Master, which are displayed in the art gallery Vladimir Dimitrov – The Master together with the works of other Kyustendil artists. Just off the art gallery is the home place of the great humanist Dimitar Peshev. His house contains an exhibition displaying his contribution to the saving of Bulgarian Jews in 1943 – a human act, which impressed the whole democratic world. For a relaxation, we offer a walk along the pedestrian alley in the town where one can enjoy the centuries-old chestnut and lime trees, the houses designed in the style and architecture typical for the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century. We also offer a visit to the Emfiedzhieva House, which has an exhibition displaying the way of life of the wealthy Kyustendil citizen from the same period. At the end of the day, after having gathered impressions, the tourists could have a dinner in one of the many restaurants in the town. As for accommodation, the town offers hotels in excellent conditions.

The second day of the tour continues with visiting the Ilyo Voivoda House-Museum. This place exhibits objects illustrating the fights of the Bulgarians from the Kyustendil region for national liberation and unification.

Leaving Kyustendil, the tourist group will head for the village of Nevestino situated 13 km. away from the town, lying in the picturesque valley of the river Struma. Here over the river towers the medieval Kadin Bridge wrapped in the mystery of beautiful legends and sayings about people and events.

Leaving Nevestino and passing the town of Dupnitsa, the tourists will head for





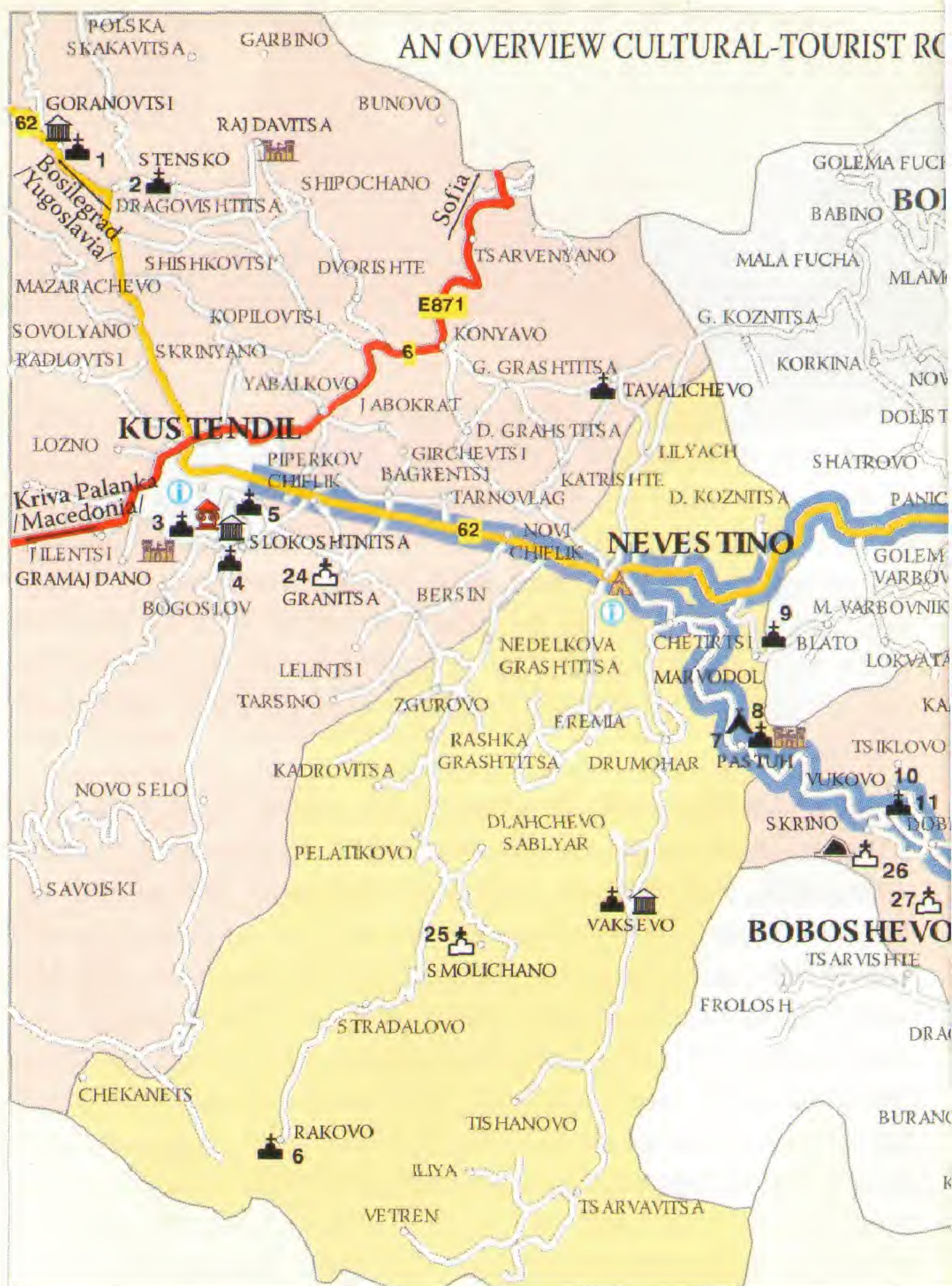
the town of Sapareva Banya. Here one finds a geyser (103°C), which every 6 seconds produces an 18-metre-high hot water stream. The main focus of the tour in Sapareva Banya is the medieval church St. Nikola from 12th century. Those who are interested in ancient times will visit the remains of the ancient town of Germanea, while the ones interested in Christian art will visit the churches and chapels in the town and its vicinities, which date back to the Bulgarian Revival Period. Both the town and the resort Panichishte, lying 10 km. away from it offer outstanding conditions for eating and accommodation.

The tour continues with the town of Rila, where the tourists can visit the complex Babinska mahala (Grandmother's neighbourhood) from the Revival period, the medieval church St. Archangel Michael with its unique frescoes. The convent Orlitsa (female eagle) with the St. Peter and Pavel church lies 2 km. away from the town, on the way to the Rila Monastery. Going along the picturesque valley of the river Rilska, deeper and deeper into the heart of the Great Rila desert before the eyes of those fascinated by the surrounding beauty tower the walls of the Great Rila Monastery. Here the impressions build up one after the other - the unique architecture, the church with its high art value wood-carving and frescoes, the unique Mageritsa (kitchen), the medieval Hrelyova Tower, the superb interior design of the guest-hostels, the rich museum exhibition, etc. And all of this, being in an organic unity with nature, inspires awe to that which was created by man and awe to God.

After visiting the Rila Monastery the tour goes back passing the town of Rila and heads for Boboshevo. In the vicinity of the town lies St. Dimitar Church – a magnificent monument of the medieval architecture and paintings from 15th century. On the way back to Kyustendil the tour passes by the enchanting Skrino defile and again returns to the Kyustendil valley. Those who are interested might visit the medieval churches St. Petka in the village of Vukovo and St. Ivan (St. John) in the village of Pastuh.



Pleasantly tired by the impressions and emotions, the tourists will again sink into the calm atmosphere of the ancient and modern Kyustendil.



Objects	Legend
Chapel	Tourist Information Centre
Church	Camping area
Monastery	Settlement
Museum	Main road
Roman Thermae	Secondary road
Architectural Complex	Road
Fortress	International and Republican road indication
Ancient settlement	Tourist tour
Geyser, Thermal spring	Outgoing road from the District
Waterfall	
Cave	

Tourist Information Centres

Kyustendil - 2500, 18 Tzar Simeon Str.
tel./fax: + 359 78 / 51 811

Boboshevo, 2 Ivan Kepov Str.
tel.: + 359 7046 / 23 54

Rila, Vazrazhdane Sq.
tel./fax: + 359 7054 / 2021
e-mail: rila_tur@abv.bg

Panichishte
for the National park „Rila”
tel.: + 359 707 / 33 02

ROUTE "THE KYUSTENDIL REGION - A CENTRE OF ANCIENT CULTURES"



Church

- 1 Sv. Archangel Mihail
- 2 Medieval church
- 3 Sv. Georgi
- 4 Sv. Nikola
- 5 Uspenie Bogorodichno
- 6 Sv. Troitsa
- 7 Sv. Ivan
- 8 Sv. Bogoroditsa
- 9 Cemetery church
- 10 Sv. Petka
- 11 Sv. Nikolai
- 12 Sv. Todor

- 13 Sv. Iliya
- 14 Sv. Atanasii
- 15 Sv. Archangel Mihail
- 16 Sv. Luka
- 17 Sv. Ivan Rilski
- 18 Sv. Yoan Bogoslov
- 19 Sv. Nikola
- 20 Sv. Chetirideset machenitsi
- 21 Sv. Georgi
- 22 Sv. Nikolai
- 23 Sv. Archangel Mihail

Monastery

- 24 Sv. Luka
- 25 Sv. Ana
- 26 Sv. Ivan Rilski
- 27 Sv. Dimitar
- 28 Orlitsa Cloister
- 29 Pchelino Cloister
- 30 Rila Monastery
- 31 Pokrov Bogorodichen
- 32 Sv. Stefan

The project is co-financed by the **European Union** and **Republic of Bulgaria**



European Union



Republic of Bulgaria



District of Kyustendil



● Обзорен културно- туристически маршрут	An Overview Cultural - Tourist Route	Überblick über die Kultur – Marschroute
● Кюстендил	Kyustendil	Kjustendil
● Кюстенди - археологически паметници	Kyustendil Archeological Monuments	Kjustendil Archäologische Denkmäler
● Музейните експозиции на Кюстендил	The Museum Expositions in Kyustendil	Die Museensammlungen in Kjustendil
● Църква „Св. Димитър“	St. Dimitar Church	Die Kirche St. Dimitar
● Невестино	Nevestino	Newestino
● Бобошево	Boboshevo	Boboschewo
● Църква „Св. Георги“	St. George Church	Die Kirche St. Georgi
● Рипа	Rila	Rila
● Сапарева баня	Sapareva Banya	Saparewa Banja

Проектът е съфинансиран от **Европейския Съюз и Република България**

The project is co-financed by the **European Union** and **Republic of Bulgaria**

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Европейски Съюз
European Union
Europäische Union



Република България
Republic of Bulgaria
Republik Bulgarien



Област Кюстендил
District of Kyustendil
Region Kjustendil

KYUSTENDIL





Kyustendil was called Pautalia in ancient times and Velbuzhd in the Middle Ages. The area has been inhabited for seven thousand years and has been a town for two thousand years now. It has existed and survived through the centuries. It has been destroyed but has resurrected from the ashes and the ruins to become glorious and magnificent once again. In the antiquity Kyustendil was an administrative

centre of a Roman province, in the Middle Ages - a centre of despotism, while in the Ottoman period - a centre of one the biggest sandzhaks (municipalities) within the Ottoman Empire.

Curative mineral water springs, favourable climate, fertile land, rich ore mines, crossroad of major transport routes, nature shaped by the hand of the Holy artist – all of these characterize Kyustendil as the eternal town. In the past Kyustendil was known as the Emperors' town, the town of Constantine the Despot, the town of the hamams (Turkish Baths), „which brought all sorts of benefits to the body”, the town of Ilyo and Rumena Voivodas. Today it is known as the town of artists, the town at the foot of the Hissarluka Hill, the Orchard garden of Bulgaria, „the green town” or „the place touched by Gods”.





Because of the favourable conditions that Pautalia offered, i.e. the curative mineral water springs and mild climate people worshipped Asclepius (Roman God of Medicine). In honour of this God, a sanctuary called Asclepion was built, which was second in size after the Epidaurus sanctuary – the biggest one within the Roman Empire.

The archaeological excavations recovered not only ancient therms from 2nd–3rd century, which are restored and exhibited in the town centre, but also the late ancient and medieval fortress in Hissarluka. Other finds include remnants from a city-wall, temples, public buildings decorated with rich mosaics, neighbourhoods, streets with well-preserved pavement, etc. A real masterpiece of the medieval architecture and paintings existing since the time of medieval Velbuzhd is St. George Church from 12th–13th century, located in the neighbourhood of Kolusha. The mosques Fatih Mehmed and Ahmed Bey, the Pirgova Tower, Alay, Dervish and Chifte Baths have all been preserved since the Ottoman period.



The churches Uspenie Bogorodichno (The Assumption), St. Mina, and St. St. Cyril and Methodius school and a number of houses date back to the Renaissance period.

A major factor for the development of Kyustendil over the centuries has been the hot mineral water springs, whose curative quality has made the town so popular through the centuries. Today people can cure various diseases in the sanatoriums in the town – artery and rheumatic diseases, gynecological, neurological diseases, skin diseases and poisoning, etc. The curative mineral water, the good climatic conditions, the beautiful nature and rich cultural traditions create excellent conditions for recreation.

The Kyustendil museum has gathered an extremely rich collection of materials for 130 years of work. Parts of these historical artefacts are displayed in the following exhibitions: Archeological exhibition; Fights for National Liberation in the Kyustendil region displayed in the House-Museum Ilyo Voivoda; City Life displayed in Emfiedzhieva House; The Saving of Bulgarian Jews – in the museum Dimitar Peshev. A rich collection of paintings of Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master as well as works of other famous Kyustendil artists are displayed in the modern building of the Kyustendil art gallery Vladimir Dimitrov - The Master.

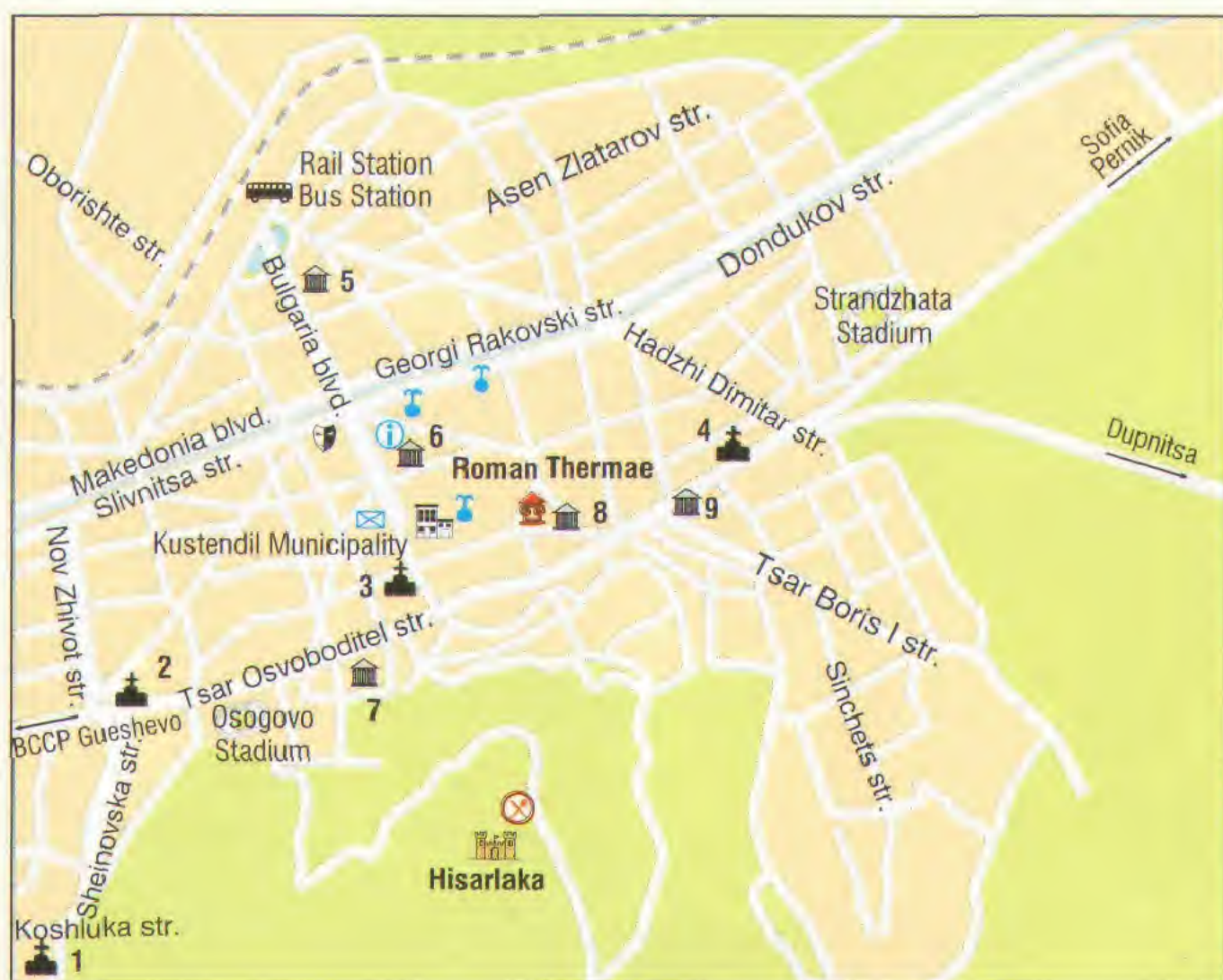
One of the most emblematic events, that annually takes place in Kyustendil, is the contest „Miss Kyustendil Spring”. This contest combines pagan and Christian elements as well as contemporary drama art.



Kyustendil lies 525 metres above sea level in Southwestern Bulgaria. To the north, the Kyustendil valley borders the labyrinth of the Kraishte region, to the south - the steep slopes of Osogovo Mountain, to the west- the Lisets Mountain, to the northeast - the Konyavo Mountain. The river Struma crosses the plain from the north and flows down to the south and thus shapes the Zemen and Skrino defiles.

The town of Kyustendil is the administrative centre of the Kyustendil region, which includes the following municipalities: Kyustendil, Dupnitsa, Bobov dol, Sapareva banya, Rila, Kocherinovo, Nevestino, Boboshevo and Treklyano. The territory of the Kyustendil region is crossed by the International Transport Corridor No.8 and is a major transport and railroad junction. Kyustendil is located 86 km. away from Sofia, 23 km. from the state border with the Republic of Macedonia, and 30 km. from the state border with the Republic of Serbia.





Legend	Objects
Church	1 Church „Sv. Georgi“
Museum	2 Church „Sv. Mina“
Thermae	3 Church „Uspenie Bogorodichno“
Theatre	4 Church „Sv. Dimitar“
Fortress	5 Historical Museum - Administration
Mineral Bath	6 Museum-House „Dimitar Peshev“ Art Gallery „Vladimir Dimitrov - Maistora“
Tourist Information Centre	7 Museum „Emfiedzhieva kashta“
Transport Station	8 Museum - Mosque „Ahmed Bey“
Post office	9 Museum-House „Ilyo Voivoda“
Administration	
Restaurant	

Information Tourist Centre
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www.culttourism-kn.bg

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District of Kyustendil

KYUSTENDIL
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
MONUMENTS





"... It was a magnificent ancient city. And even though now we can only witness remnants of buildings, destroyed by time, the city has preserved its past beauty."



These words, written by an anonymous author more than 800 years ago, render laconically and at the same time completely the impressions of every visitor of the Eternal city – Kyustendil. Touching the remnants that have survived through the ages is a life-long thrilling experience. The archaeological excavations and research that started in 1906 made it possible to get to know the past ages through the centuries-old monuments.

"... It was a magnificent ancient city..."





How old is the city? The archaeological evidence gathered through the years, shows that a settlement, dating back to the end of the Stone Copper Age (4th century B.C.) existed within the territory of present-day Kyustendil. Centuries later, the Thracian village situated near the mineral water springs grew into the flourishing city of Pautalia, at the foot of the Ossogovo Mountain. The city was well fortified by defence walls and towers and during the 2nd-4th centuries expanded to 29.3 hectares. Private and public buildings were erected inside the town. Most of them have already been excavated in archaeological research. Among the monuments which are researched today are the therms (public baths) – the biggest researched site area and really impressive as a construction.

The magnetic effect of the hot mineral water springs led to the erection of the famous in the antiquity Asclepius (God of Medicine) temple, which was a sanctuary. In the vicinity of the mineral water



springs, on the northern slope of the Sacred hill Hissarluka, amidst the centuries-old woods have been erected temples in honour of the gods Apollo, Asclepius, Hygeia and Telesphorus, the Graces, Mithreum (God Mithra's sanctuary), and sacrificial altars of gods from the Thracian and Graeco-Roman Pantheon.

The second fortress, which covers a smaller area, and is situated on the Hissarluka Hill dates back to 4th century. The excavated so far seven early Christian basilicas make it evident that during the 4th century the town grew into a major Christian centre, with the rank of bishopric.

In the Middle Ages, the town was named Velbuzhd, unlike the ancient times when it was named Pautalia. Its central part (the Citadel) is situated in the late ancient Hissarluka fortress and the outskirts are situated at the foot of the hill, within the ancient town.

The archeological excavations provide major evidence about the history of Velbuzhd. The results give enough reasons to speculate that the medieval Velbuzhd is situated on an extremely big territory



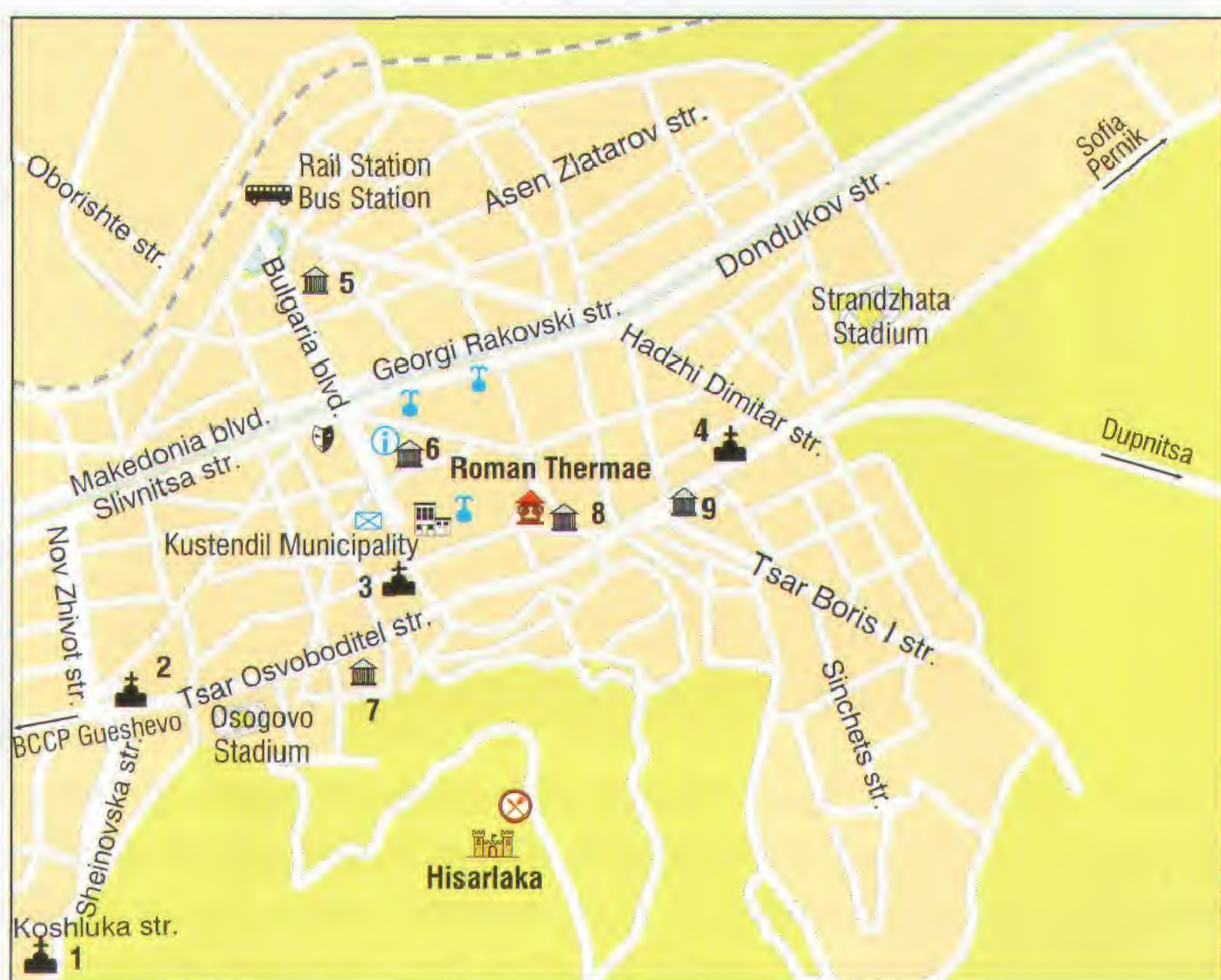
and has a very interesting urban planning.

"...And even though now we can only witness remnants of buildings, destroyed by time, the city has preserved its past beauty."



If we pay attention again to the words of this ancient writer, we would see that Kyustendil has preserved its ancient beauty combining history and modernity. The future prosperity of the town and its return to past fame are still to come because here there are curative mineral water springs, favourable climate and fertile land. It is still the place crossed by major transport routes. Everything that has made Kyustendil "The Eternal City" is here.





Legend		Objects	
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	Theatre	4	Church „Sv. Dimitar“
	Fortress	5	Historical Museum - Administration
	Mineral Bath	6	Museum-House „Dimitar Peshev“
	Tourist Information Centre		Art Gallery „Vladimir Dimitrov - Maistora“
	Transport Station	7	Museum „Emfiedzhieva kashta“
	Post office	8	Museum-Mosque „Ahmed Bey“
	Administration	9	Museum-House „Ilyo Voivoda“
	Restaurant		

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District of Kyustendil

THE MUSEUM
EXPOSITIONS
IN KYUSTENDIL



The thousand-year old development of Kyustendil district as a settlement conditioned by favourable physical geography and nature has left deep and impressive marks of past ages. Many places and materials are characteristic of the regions – typical representations of the prehistoric age and the antiquity, unique churches and monasteries from the Middle Ages and the Bulgarian National Revival, which include the Rila Monastery – a cultural monument of world significance. These places being of great architectural and artistic value carry the specific understanding and colour of the age.

As a result of many years of research and collecting the museums and exhibition halls hold superb examples of the human civilization from all historical periods. The archaeological, architectural and documentary monuments presented there, the variety of indigenous forms and hues in the traditional clothes and objects from everyday life are the material expression of the spiritual culture, the specific character and identity of the human communities which lived in these lands.



ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPOSITION

The permanent archaeological exposition of Regional Archaeological Historical Museum is set up in the mosque Ahmed bey, built in 1575, a cultural monument of national significance. It includes more than 800 exhibits from the whole region of Kyustendil. The exhibits presented and the broad chronologic range they encompass give the visitor the opportunity to get information on the cultural-historical development of the region and to get





deep back into the centuries - from 7th–6th century B.C. till 14th century.

In the Prehistory section one can find: labour tools, pottery, objects for religious use from the neolith, the eneolith and the early Bronze Age. Among them is the earliest pottery known to be found in the territory of Bulgaria, a great variety of zoomorphic and anthropomorphic works of plastic arts and the unique model of a furnace with a moon calendar thought to be the earliest known in Europe.

In the Antiquity section the pre-Roman Age is illustrated by funerary objects from a Thracian necropolis (7th - 6th century B.C.), jewelry, pottery, everyday objects, weapons. Roman Pautalia and the adjacent territories are represented by pottery, applications of chariots, busts and statuettes of gods from the Graeco-Roman pantheon, marble relief consecration tables of Zeus and Hera, Asclepius, Hygeia and Telesphorus, Mithra and others. A floor mosaic from Roman peristyle building is shown with the image of Hercules on it with an extremely high artistic value.

The Velbuzhd from the Middle Ages is represented with pottery, objects from the Revival, weapons, jewelry, labour tools and others.

HOUSE-MUSEUM ILYO VOIVODA

The restored house of Ilyo Markov, one of the renowned figures of the National liberation movement, hosts an exposition called: The National Liberation fights of the people from Kyustendil. Focus is given to the battles from the 15th century up to the Liberation, as well as to the people's contribu-





tion to the national liberation and unification of the Bulgaria in the late 19th and early 20th century.

EMFIEDZHIEVA HOUSE

The Emfiedzhieva house is an architectural monument from the Bulgarian Revival period. It is situated in the old Kyustendil residential district Losenets (Bagluck). The museum exhibition Urban Life and Culture of the Kyustendil population from the end of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century is hosted there. You can see the typical interior, furniture and household utilities of the urban houses, belonging to the better-off part of the intelligentsia or to rich and famous Kyustendil families.



HOUSE-MUSEUM DIMITER PESHEV

In 2002, the ambassador of Israel, Emanuel Zisman, and Kyustendil Municipality implemented a project for the restoration of Dimiter Peshev's house and its turning into a museum. The permanent exhibition with original belongings, photos and facsimiles tells the story of what happened in March 1943 and of the worldly acknowledged merit of Dimiter Peshev and his fellow-citizens from Kyustendil, who contributed to the salvation of the Jews in Bulgaria.

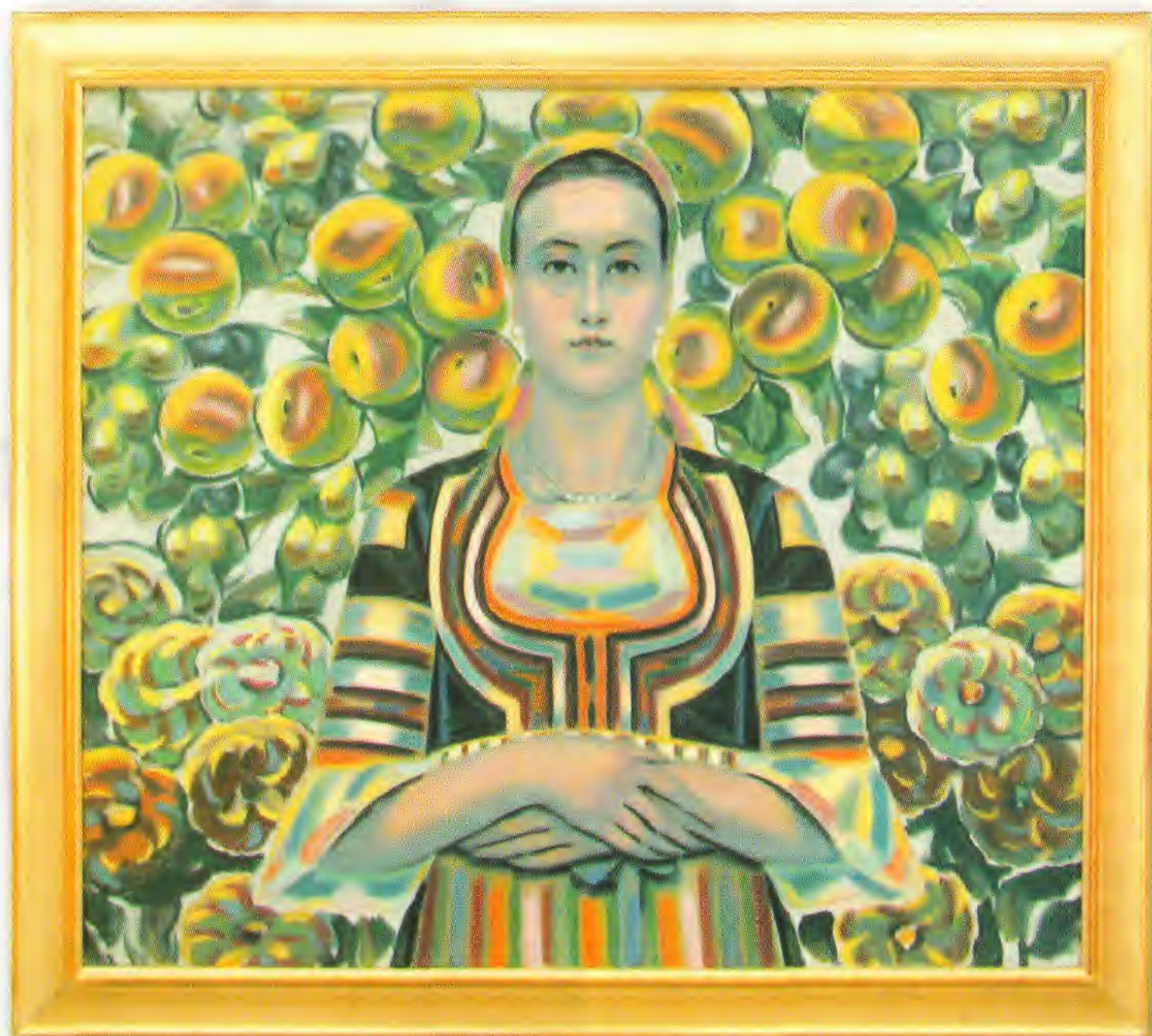


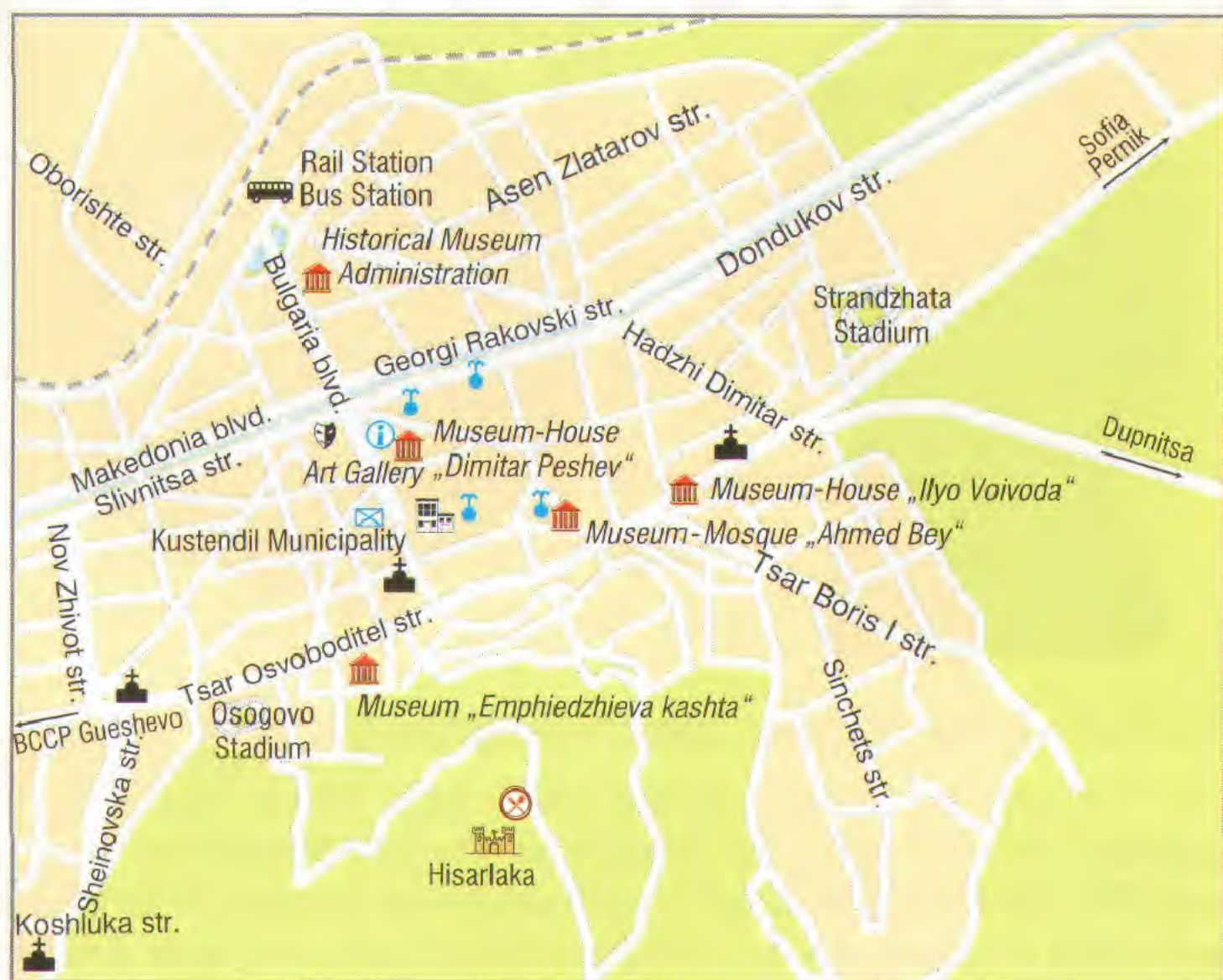
ART GALLERY

VLADIMIR DIMITROV - THE MASTER

The art gallery in Kyustendil, which is named after the most significant Bulgarian artist of world fame, was established in 1959, and in 1972 it moved to an especially made for it modern building.

The gallery has the major and largest collection of unique works of Vladimir Dimitrov the Master, set-up in a permanent exposition. It keeps and organizes regular exhibitions of other eminent artists from Kyustendil like Stoyan Venev, K. Tsonev, M. Bentsionov, N. Mirchev, As. Vasilev, and others. Performances of modern authors from Kyustendil, visiting, anniversary and thematic exhibitions are organized in the hall for temporary exhibitions. Annually, the gallery gives its halls for the closing part of the International plenary meeting St. Luka, which takes place in Kyustendil every October.





Legend	
	Church
	Museum
	Theatre
	Fortress
	Mineral bath
	Tourist Information Centre
	Transport Station
	Post office
	Administration
	Restaurant

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District of Kyustendil

ST. DIMITAR CHURCH





Historical evidence shows that the Boboshevo monastery St. Dimitar, situated on the east wooded slope of Boboshevski Ruen summit in Vlahina Mountain has provided shelter to the most famous Bulgarian saint St. Ivan Rilski (John of Rila). The most famous Bulgarian citizen of the desert, born in the village of Skrinno (Kyustendil region), spent some time in this monastery for educational purposes before moving to the Rila Mountain, as is mentioned in the Saint's life by Patriarch Evtimii Turnovski. It was in this church that he cut his hair to become a monk.

The monastery church has been restored in the 80s of the 15th century. During the Ottoman Rule, the Boboshevo Monastery was a place for education and enculturation. Some of the exquisitely decorated manuscripts, which have been rewritten over and over again and preserved at the monastery, as well as the iconostasis and icons, are all kept today at the Church Historical Museum and the National Art Gallery in Sofia.





The authentic murals have been preserved and restored in the church. They date back to 1488 and entirely cover the walls and the ceiling, as well as the western façade (today this is the eastern wall of the narthex). The quality and level of preservation of the murals provoke great interest and make the church an impressive art monument from the period of the late Middle Ages.

The murals, painted by hieromonk Neofit and his sons – the priests Dimitar and Bogdan, stand out with freedom and expression. Being masters in their field, Neofit and his sons created realistic multifigural compositions sticking to the norms of the established iconography. The figures are dynamic, the images – emotional and the faces – expressive. The colour palette is dark and dense. The mild and pleasant shades are deep, dense and in harmony.

The patron of the St. Dimitar church is portrayed in the register of the saints in full length. He, riding a horse, painted in the niche





by the entrance of the church. Two events from his Saint's life have been preserved on the western wall of the naos.

The composition Deisis occupies a central place in the naos. Christ is depicted all-powerful, sitting on a majestic throne in majestic garments and wearing a crown on his head. To the left





of Him is Virgin Mary and to the right St. Yoan Predtecha (St. John the Precursor) and they beg the people for condescension. Special attention should be paid to the Judgement Day composition, which is painted on the west wall of the church. The plot is developed thoroughly and with imagination, without completely complying with the canons of the then official Byzantine iconography. Together with the usual portrayals of sinners and righteous men, of apostles and saints, it includes numerous curious details such as the zodiac signs, personifications of winds, etc.

Visiting and getting to know the site will give you the opportunity to see a fascinating monument, known so far only by the experts. The enchanting combination of the art values of the church and beautiful nature makes the experience so impressive and unforgettable that the beautiful memories remain for life.





- Legend**
- Monastery, Church
 - Thermal spring
 - Karst spring
 - Tourist Information Centre
 - Peak with above sea - level
 - Prehistoric settlement
 - Cave
 - Settlement



St. Dimitar Church lies 4 km. to the west of the town of Boboshevo. It is the only building of a medieval monastery that has survived so far. The church is located in a place tucked in magnificent nature; a place with rich cultural heritage with extremely precious medieval Christian monuments. The church is just off the Rila Monastery (about 40 km. away) and lies on the pilgrimage road to Aton.

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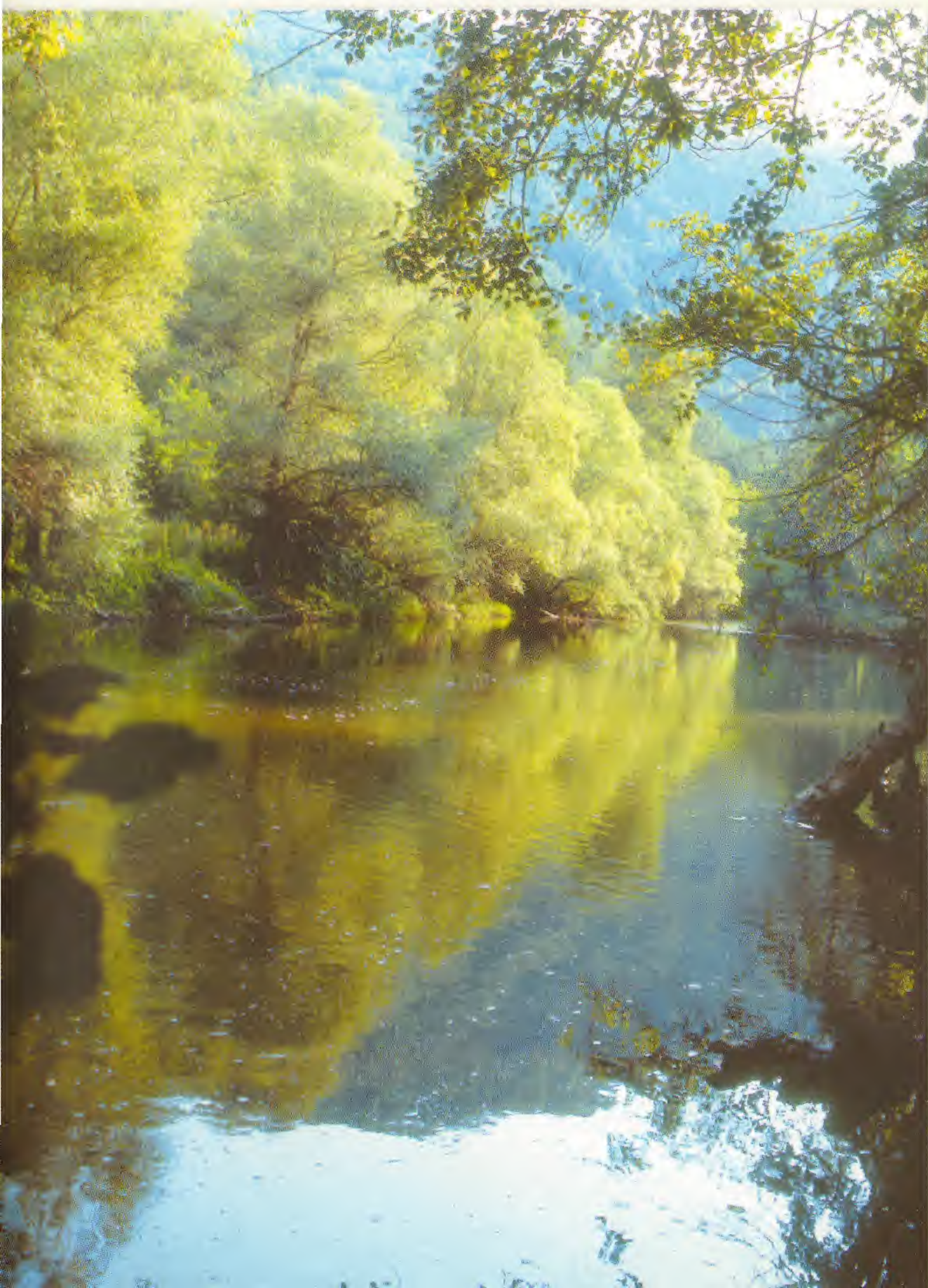
District of Kyustendil



NEVESTINO



Nevestino region is a unique place for recreation amidst beautiful and unspoiled nature, still unknown to those who seek for seclusion and want to become one with the surrounding. Everything here has been absorbed into the shadow of unique and full of dramatism legends about beautiful ladies, brave and ambitious young men, dedicated mothers, and unrivalled masters. Legends – as much fairy, as real – as is the history of this region itself. The names of various places, rives, neighbourhoods and villages come from these legends. It is here in the region that the river Struma seems to be most impressive. It makes the surroundings look exquisite with its beautiful meanders and provides conditions for varied flora. At times wide, at times narrow, the river with its slow and calm waters leaves this place and heads for the sea.



Nevestino region has a rich cultural and historical heritage with monuments dating back to antiquity. On the outskirts of the village of Nevestino, in the place called Moshteni, a Neolithic settlement has been found in archeological excavations. This place is situated on the river ledge of the left bank of Struma. In the region of Studena Voda, on the left bank of Eleshnitsa river another prehistoric settlement has been excavated and studied. This region is located within the territory of the village of Vaksevo. Within Western Bulgaria, this is the only settlement known so far to comprise elements from three prehistoric periods - Neolith, Eneolith and early Bronze Age. This fact makes this settlement a major cultural and chronological site in the river basin of Struma. The territory of the municipality includes a great number of ancient settlement, hillocks, ne-



cropolis, fortresses and ruins scattered in the villages of Nevestino, Pastuh, Vaksevo, Smolichano, Pelatikovo, Rashka Grashtitsa, etc. The sites that date back to the Middle Ages are the fortress in the region of Skalet, the churches St. Ivan (St. John) and St. Bogoroditsa (Holy Virgin) in the village of Pastuh, the cemetery church near the village of Murvodol, the church Selishte (Settlement) in the village of Vaksevo, and the church St. Troitsa (The Holy Trinity) in the village of Rakovo. On the foundations of a medieval church near the village of Smolichano has been erected the monastery St. Ana (or St. Yana). This monastery is situated above a rock niche with a waterfall and sacred water and has become an extremely popular place for recreation.



The most precious architectural monument of culture on the territory of the municipality is the bridge Kadin most (The Bride's bridge), which was built in 1470. This bridge is over the river Struma near the village of Nevestino. Its name is veiled under beautiful legends and tales. The architecture of the bridge is a mixture of ancient, medieval and Renaissance elements, which are locally reproduced. The bridge is 100 metres long and has five circle vaults, the highest of which is in the middle. It is covered with granite slabs, which have curb stones at both sides. There is a granite plate with an inscription in Turkish built in the south part of the east parapet. This inscription gives information about the year of the erection. In the immediate proximity of the bridge is the Chetirski inn, where the visitors of the village could enjoy various delicious dishes.





The territory of Nevestino Municipality is located in the south-west part of the Kyustendil region on the massifs of Ossogovo and Vlahina mountains. Its territory contains a greater part of the geographic region Piyanets. The river Struma crosses this territory. The local rivers Eleshnitsa, Reichitsa and Grashtichka flow into Struma.

The municipality, whose administrative centre is the village of Nevestino, includes 23 villages, some of which are scattered into a great number of neighbourhoods. They are located amidst picturesque nature along the rivers and in flat areas in the mountains. Nevestino lies 13 km away from Kyustendil, on the crossroads where two roads divide – one to the town of Dupnitsa and the other one – along the river Struma crossing the town of Boboshevo and heading either to the Rila Monastery or to the international road E-79 towards Kulata.

To reach Nevestino municipality by public transport, you can take either a bus or a train from Sofia to Kyustendil. At Kyustendil bus station there are buses to Dupnitsa, Rila Monastery and Blagoevgrad, which leave every one hour and twenty minutes. You can take either of the buses and get off in Nevestino.



Legend

-  Museum
-  Church, Monastery
-  Tourist Information Centre
-  Settlement
-  Ancient Settlement
-  Fortress
-  Bridge
-  Camp

Objects

- 1 Church „Sv. Ivan“
- 2 Church „Sv. Bogoroditsa“
- 3 Cemetery church
- 4 Church „Sv. Troitsa“
- 5 Monastery „Sv. Ana“
- 6 Bridge „Kadin most“



Municipality Administration
v. Nevestino – 2595
17 Vladimir Poptomov Str.
tel./fax: + 359 9715 / 22 30
www.culttourism-kn.bg

The project is co-financed by the **European Union** and **Republic of Bulgaria**



European Union



Republic of Bulgaria



District of Kyustendil

BOBOSHEVO





The beautiful Boboshevo region is a place, where two mountains meet; a place, where the river Djerman flows into the river Struma; a place where the river Struma leaves the fault and at times slow, at times fast it flows down to search for the sea. The river Struma is a natural link between two climate zones - the one of the Mediterranean and the one of Europe. This region is extremely rich in flora and fauna. It is a crossroad of different cultures, a place as

much known as unknown, a piece of land where there will be always things to be discovered and rediscovered.

Due to its favourable location and climate, the Boboshevo region has been settled since ancient times. A prehistoric site dating back to the early Eneolith (the beginning of 5th century B.C.) has been found and studied in the village of Slatino on the plateau near the Tchardaki area. This site has provided precious scientific information and materials of high value - over 500 ceramic containers, true samples of applied arts, and wide variety of anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plastics. A unique find is the sample of a furnace, which has a Moon calendar on its bottom. This Moon calendar is the most ancient calendar known in Europe.

A distinguishing cultural feature of the Boboshevo region is the abundance of medieval churches and monasteries. The most famous Bulgarian saint Ivan Rilski (John of Rila) was born in the village of Skrino. The monastery St Dimitar, situated just below the Ruen Mount, was the place where he worked on





his skills for spiritual contemplation and acquired knowledge from the sacred liturgical and religious books. Later in his life, he moved to a nearby cave, where he lived a solitary life, spent his time in prayers, fasting and destitution. Having visited many places, the saint settled down among the wild nature of the Rila desert and lived there until the end of his life. Meanwhile he laid the foundations of the great Rila Monastery.

The territory of the Boboshevo region (also known in some scientific circles as the Bulgarian Jerusalem), was a spiritual, religious and cult centre with rich traditions in church building in 15th-17th centuries. A great number of churches and monasteries from this period have survived until present day - the St. Todor Church, St. Iliya Church, and St. Anastasii Church in Boboshevo, the St. Petka and St. Nikolai Churches in the village of Vukovo. Yet the most significant of all remains the St. Dimitar Monastery in Boboshevo. Situated on the east slope of the Ruen Mount, 3 km. away from the town of Boboshevo,



the monastery was erected in 12th century. It was destroyed by the Ottomans during the time of the Ottoman Rule in Bulgaria and was again reconstructed in 1488. This monastery offers a magnificent view of the Pirin, Rila, Verila and Vitosha Mountains and parts of the Konyavo Mountain.

The St. John of Rila Monastery, also known as the Ruen Monastery, was erected in 2002 - 2003 in a beautiful area 3 km. away from the village of Skrino. A picturesque path from the monastery leads up to the cave, which was the shelter of Saint John of Rila.



The whole Boboshevo region is situated near the Rila Monastery, in an area with peculiar cultural characteristics and rich cultural heritage, and lies on the pilgrim's road to Aton. This region has an immense potential and offers a unique opportunity for organizing and developing cultural and pilgrimage tourism.

The well-arranged museum exhibition, which is in the centre of Boboshevo, displays various and curious exhibits illustrating the rich history of the region from all historical periods. The well-preserved cultural tradition is alive in the annual celebration of Babin Den (Midwives' Day), Trifon Zarezan (Vinegrower's Day), St Todor's Day, Lazaruvane (St. Lazarus' Day) and various other folklore holidays and local fairs.



Boboshevo municipality is situated in the south-eastern part of the Kyustendil region. It is encircled by the Skakavitsa part of the impressive Rila Mountain and the slopes of Vlahina Mountain with its most northern part - Boboshevski Ruen.

Boboshevo municipality includes the town of Boboshevo (the administrative centre) and the following villages – Badino, Blazhievo, Visoka Mogila, Vukovo, Dobrovo, Kamenik, Skrino, Slatino, Sopovo, Usoika, and Tsiklovo. Boboshevo is 42 kilometres away from Sofia, 41 km. away from Kyustendil, 18 km. away from Dupnitsa and 41 km. away from the Rila Monastery.

To reach Boboshevo by public transport (buses), you can catch a bus from the Ovtcha Kupel bus station in Sofia, the Kyustendil bus station, and the Dupnitsa bus station.





Legend

Monastery

- 1 Sv. Ivan Rilski
- 2 Sv. Dimitar

Church

- 3 Sv. Todor
- 4 Sv. Iliya
- 5 Sv. Atanasii
- 6 Sv. Petka
- 7 Sv. Nikolai

- Monastery, Church
- Thermal spring
- Karst spring
- Tourist Information Centre
- Peak with above sea - level
- Prehistoric settlement
- Cave
- Settlement

Information Tourist Centre
Boboshevo
2 Ivan Kepov Str.
tel.: + 359 7046 / 23 54
www.culttourism-kn.bg

The project is co-financed by the **European Union** and **Republic of Bulgaria**



European Union



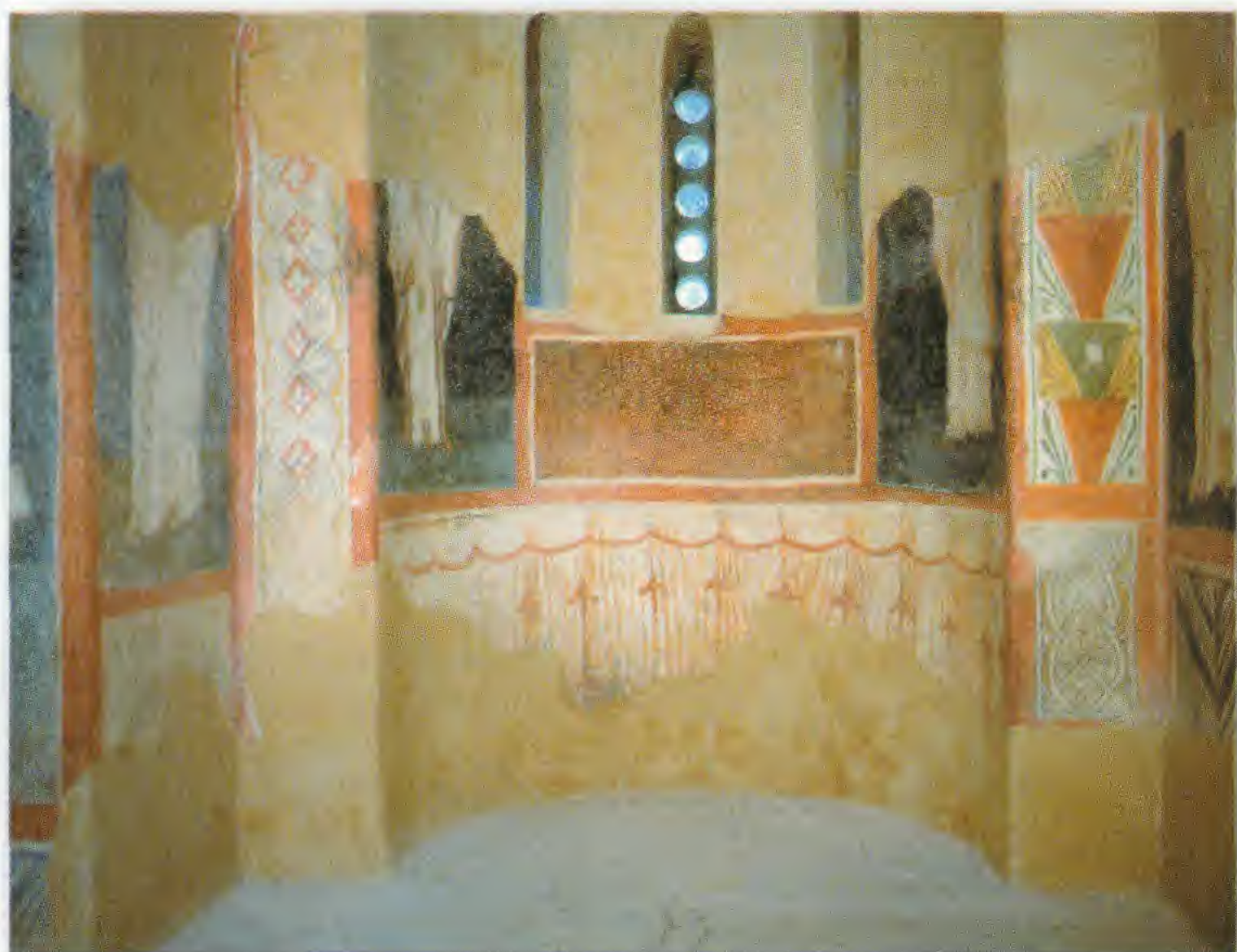
Republic of Bulgaria



District of Kyustendil

ST. GEORGE CHURCH





The church is an example of the rare “capital type” of cross-dome churches with lengthened pre apsis void, whose plan is organically linked to the front perspective. The building is built of bricks on top of stone foundation, with a typical way of constructing using the so called “sunken brick” which, along with the ceramic-plastic ornamentation of the southern and western façade marks the outset of the pictorial style in the architecture of Southwest Bulgaria.

Throughout its centuries-old history, the church has undergone many changes. After the signs of late interventions were removed, its architectural shape was restored. Judging by the architectural characteristics and the mediaeval frescos found in it, it can be said to date back to 10th–11th century.



At the restoration works in the temple there were found signs from four pictorial layers. At different places in the interior there are small fragments of frescos belonging to the first layer, which shows that the whole church was wall-painted with its very building.



The major part of the mediaeval frescos belongs to the second period of painting which have been preserved in the lower registers of the altar and the naos. These are full-length portraits of saints. The stylistic and iconographic characteristics define them as belonging to the end of 11th – beginning of 12th century, when the Velbuzhd bishopric was included within the Ochrid archbishopric. From 1090 to 1118 its archbishop is Teophilact of Ochrid, author of "The Life of Saint Kliment of Ochrid" These frescos are of extremely high artistic and historical value, and the masterly performance presumes the participation of icon-painters from Thessaloniki in their painting.





The altar represents the fathers and deacons of the church taking part in a pilgrimage procession to Christ's sacrifice. The representations of deacons with such iconography are unique in the art of Southwest Europe at this time. The portraits of four saints-healers can be found in the eastern part of the naos: St. Ermolay and St. Panteleimon, St. Damyan and St. Kozma – something too specific, which has been explained with the mineral springs in Kyustendil known from the antiquity.

The central part of the naos hosts four saints –armed warriors, clad in richly-embellished vestments. From the four only St. Mina can be identified by the medallion with Christ's image on his garment.

The western part represents four saints: two female deacons – St. Varvara and St. Nedelya, as defenders of women's access to the





naos; St. Petka or St. Marina, St. Ekatherine in emperor's garments.

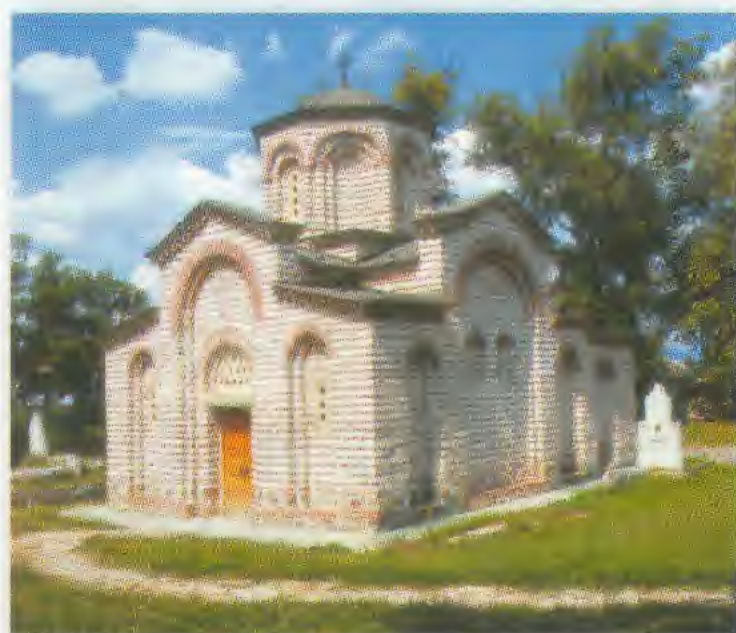
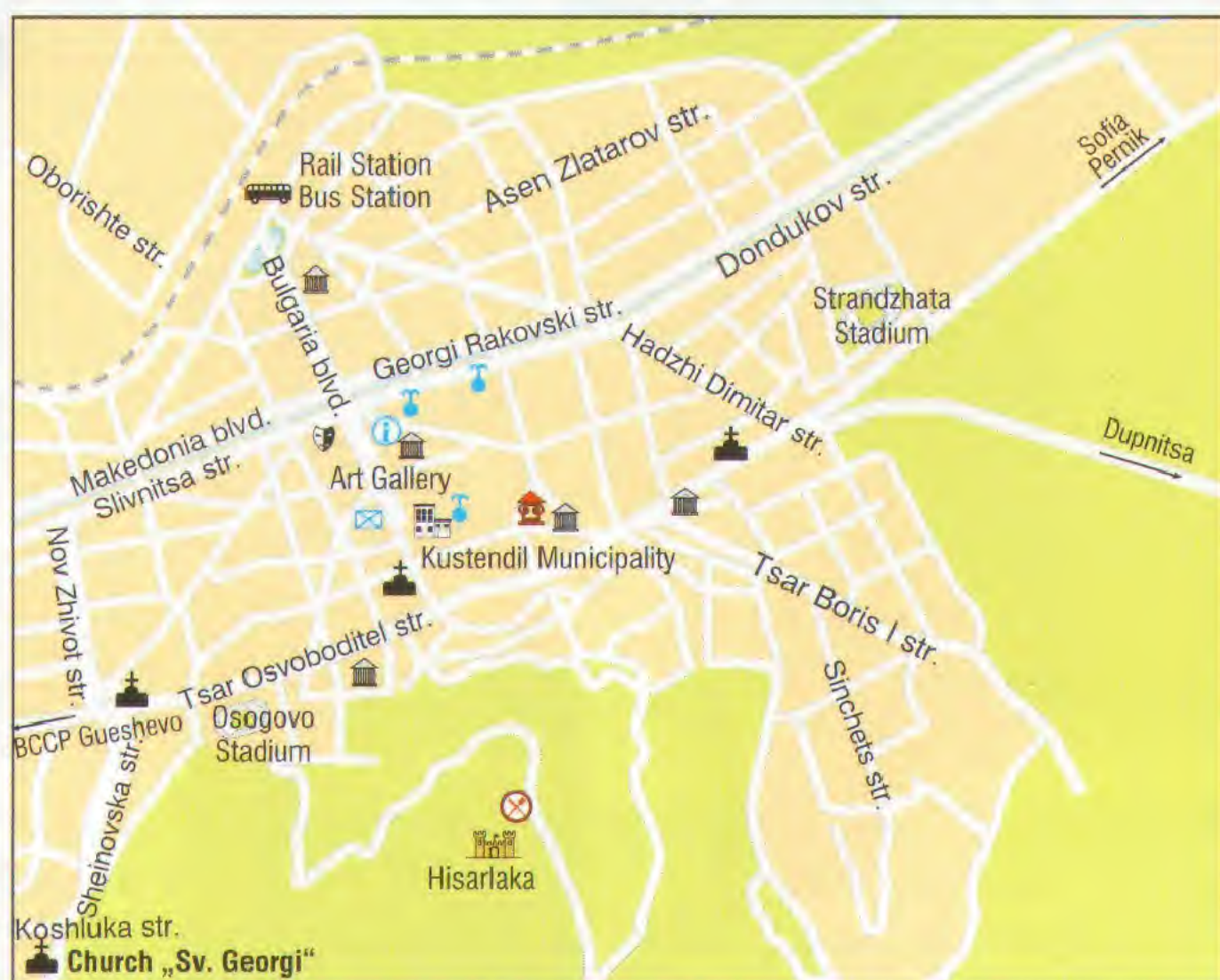
The best preserved image is St. Nikola's image, which gives an idea of the nature and beauty of this painting, at the same time exquisite and imposing, having purity and delicacy of line and soft colouring. The slight transparency and the discreetly harmonized hues remind one of monuments from the last quarter of the 11th century.

The representations of St. Sava of Serbia and St. John the Baptist in the naos and parts of two scenes in the central apsis belong to a later period – presumably post-15th century.

The last painting dates back to 1878-1882, when the church was entirely restored. The late painting has none of the artistic characteristics of the mediaeval frescos, apart from the masterly work of Ivan Dospevski in the dome (God Savaot).

St. George church is part of a religious complex, where the monastery school from the Bulgarian National Revival is as well. After its restoration and adaptation to an exhibition hall with information centre it will provide opportunities for tourism.





St. George Church is situated in Southwestern Kyustendil, in the residential district of Kolusha (the medieval village of Kolassia). It is one of the most valuable and well-preserved mediaeval cultural monuments of Bulgaria, a monument of national significance.

Regional historical museum „Acad. Yordan Ivanov“
 Kyustendil - 2500, 55 Bulgaria Blvd., p.b. 253
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www.culttourism-kn.bg

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District of Kyustendil

RILA





The magnificent nature surrounding the municipality is an inexhaustible source of spiritual and physical delight. Anyone who comes here bows their head before the majestic rock peaks, the slopes clad in mixed broad-leaved and coniferous woods, lovely valleys, where the swift-running rivers Rilska, Iliyna, Eleshnitsa and Drushliavitsa run. Surrounded by all this is the crown of the architectural, artistic and literary heritage of Bulgaria – the Rila Holy Monastery.

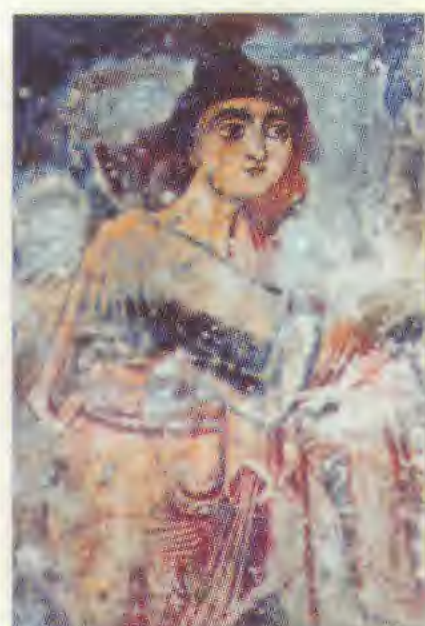
There are scores of cultural monuments in the town of Rila belonging to all historical periods. Some of the most attractive are in the architectural complex from the Bulgarian National Revival Babinska Mahala (Grandmother's Quarter) whose architecture has retained the colour of

the Revival. One of the few preserved cross-dome churches in Bulgaria is there. They have unique mediaeval frescos from 12th–13th century. The convent Orlitsa (Female Eagle) with the church St. Peter and Paul is two kilometres away from the town on the way to the Rila Monastery.

The thousand-year old history of the town is shown in a museum collection, and the tradition is still kept alive in the specific holidays of the municipality such as: Babuvane (the holiday of midwives) at Midwives' Day, the spring holiday Zdravche-Venche (Crane's-bill Garland), a folklore holiday with troupes from Southwest Bulgaria; the local fairs – at the day of The Holy Ghost in Rila, at the day of Ilinden (July 20, St. Ilya's day) in the villages of Smotchevo and Padala. The religious holidays St. Mary's Assumption (August 15) and the patron St. John of Rila the Wondermaker's day (October 19) bring together in the Rila Monastery thousands of pilgrims from all over Bulgaria and neighbouring countries.

The town of Rila is the gate to the most cherished and the most genuine Bulgarian place – the magnificent monument of the Bulgarian architecture and painting from the Middle Ages and the Revival, which have safeguarded for the next generations masterpieces of the national genius. The Rila Monastery is the biggest spiritual centre of Bulgaria, part of the world cultural heritage. It was founded in the 10th century by the monk-hermit John of Rila (Ivan Rilski) and his disciples in picturesque nature,





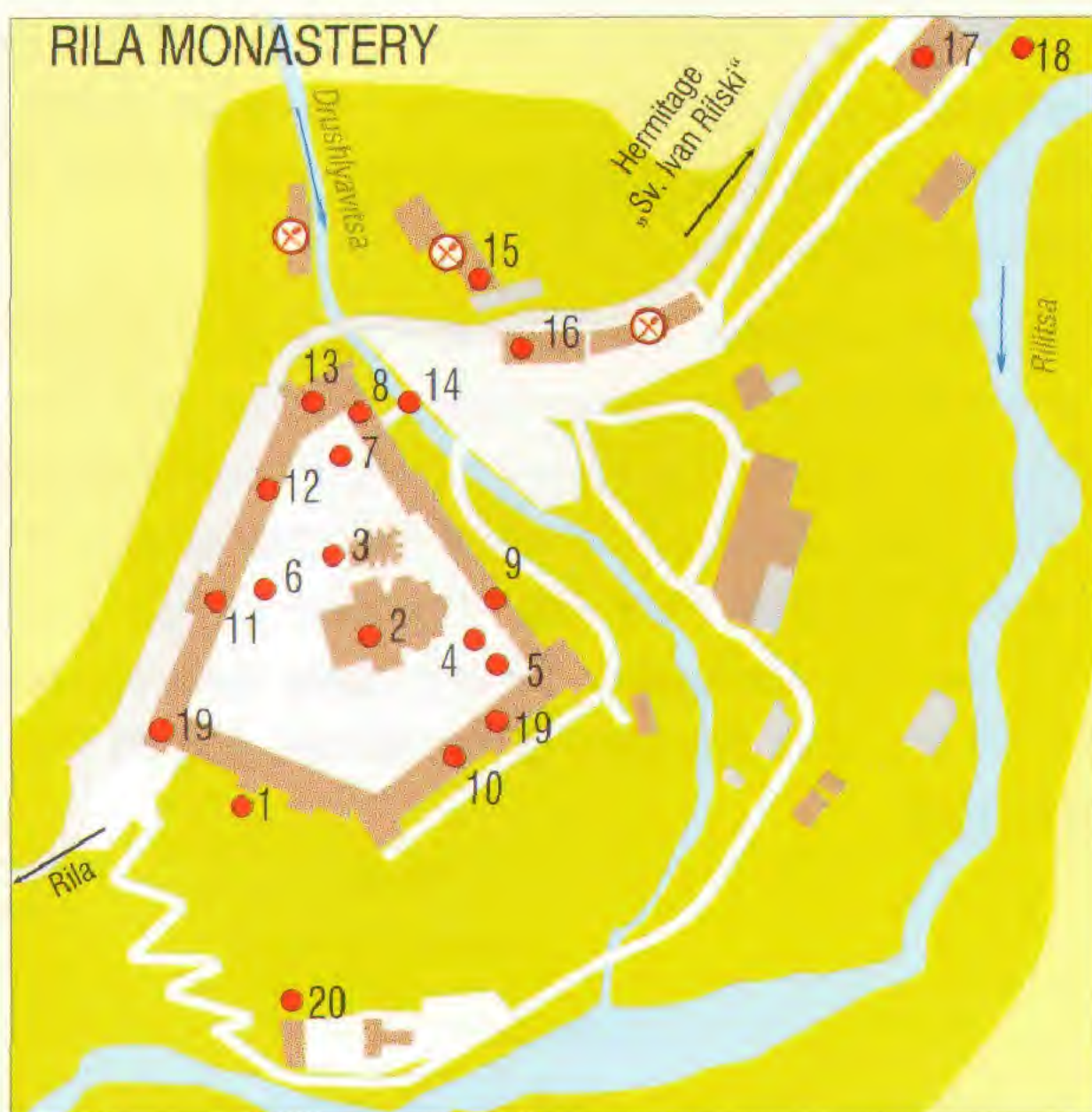
hidden in the breasts of the highest and the most majestic mountain on the Balkan Peninsula. The Rila Mountain gives its name to the saint of Rila, and what he gives to the mountain is his holiness. The fame of the hermit spreads fast and reaches the capital Tarnovo. Tzar Peter himself goes to bow before the Saint.

In the course of its centuries-old existence the Monastery has gone through years of progress and downfall. Around the year 1335, the local feudal lord Stephan Dragolov (Hrelyo) builds the monastery at its present place. Only the defensive tower – Hrelyo's tower has remained since then, with a small chapel at the last storey with a unique wall painting. In the first decades of 19th century the Monastery complex was built in its present appearance thanks to the efforts of several generations of eminent Bulgarian builders, painters and master-woodcarvers. Today the visitors here get the feeling that they become part of the divine nature and what man's hand and brain created throughout the centuries.

The Rila Monastery keeps various works of high artistic value of Bulgarian art. The collection of icons includes works from 14th to 19th century, and the woodcarvings are some of the oldest preserved in our country. The monastery library keeps rare mediaeval manuscripts. Here is where the earliest in Bulgaria printed engraving was made – the woodcuts from 18th–19th century. Well-off Bulgarians from near and far establish impressive "guest-hostels". Their arrangement carries the originality and the colour of their homes.

The guests of the Rila Monastery can go to a picnic to many more distant places of the complex like: St. Luka Monastery, The Grave of St. John of Rila, Partizanska (Partisans) Cyril's Clearing, and others.





Legend

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ● Object | 10 Icon Exposition |
| ⊗ Restaurant | 11 Ethnographical Museum |
| 1 Dupnitsa Gate | 12 Library - 2nd floor |
| 2 Church „Rozhdestvo Bogorodichno“ | 13 Drawing rooms - 3rd floor |
| 3 Tower „Hrelyova kula“ | 14 Samokov Gate |
| 4 Historical Museum | 15 Post office |
| 5 Reception Desk | 16 Bakery |
| 6 Monastery Kitchen | 17 Hotel - Restaurant |
| 7 Police and Fire Station | 18 Municipality |
| 8 Museum „Manastirsko Stopanstvo“ | 19 WC |
| 9 Rila Monastery Vestry | 20 Ossuary |



Rila municipality is situated at 750 m. altitude, at the foot of Northwest and Southwest Rila Mountain; the town of Rila itself is situated in the beautiful valley at the two banks of the middle reaches of the river Rilska.






Rila municipality includes the town of Rila – an administrative center, the villages Smotchevo, Pastra, Padala and The Rila Monastery – a cultural monument of world-wide significance. Natural Park Rila Monastery is within the municipality; it is an integral part of National Park Rila. The town of Rila is 21 km. away from the Rila Monastery, 34 km. away from the town of Dupnitsa, 65 km. from the town of Kyustendil, and 96 km. from the capital Sofia.

To get to Rila and the Rila Monastery respectively by public transport, one can use a through bus from Ovcha Kupel bus station in Sofia every day at 10.20 a.m. and from the bus station in the town of Dupnitsa at 6.40 a.m. and 2.15 p.m.





Legend

-  Church, Monastery
-  Museum
-  Tourist Information Centre
-  Settlement
-  Architectural Complex

Tourist Information Centre
Rila

Vazrazhdane Sq.
tel./fax: + 359 7054 / 20 21
e-mail: rila_tur@abv.bg
www.culttourism-kn.bg

The project is co-financed by the **European Union** and **Republic of Bulgaria**



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District of Kyustendil

SAPAREVA BANYA



Sapareva Banya is a miniature model of the Bulgaria and its beauties. Even this small piece of land has been blessed by God with worldly goods-fascinating nature, curative water springs, fertile land, and rich cultural heritage. The visitor's eyes are immediately attracted by the way history, modernity and wilderness intertwine. The flat valley of the rivers Valyavitsa, Djerman and Dju-berna, which has been populated for more than seven centuries, is tucked at the foot of the Rila and Verila mountains.



Since ancient times, the shortest way connecting the vast Balkan regions of Thrace and Macedonia has been crossing the place where these two mountains meet and divide.

Sapareva Banya's landmark are the hot mineral water springs, the most famous of which is the 103°C geyser – the only one of its kind on the Balkans and the hottest one in Europe, which produces every 6 seconds 18-metre-high hot water stream.

The sanatorium and the mineral baths are visited by people curing diseases of the locomotory system, peripheral nervous system disorders, rheumatic and skin diseases, heavy metal poisoning, etc.

Sapareva Banya's territory is abundant in various ancient cultural monuments. Archeological surveys have been conducted in the Neo-



lithic-age ancient settlement Kremenik near Sapareva Banya. The ruins of the ancient town of Germanea are in the northwestern part of the town. The churches St. Nicola in Sapareva Banya from 12th-13th century, St. Nicola and St. Archangel Michael in



the village of Saparevo have been preserved since the Middle Ages. The Bulgarian Revival spirit from the mid-19th century has been preserved in the churches St. Chetireset muchenitsi (the Church of the Forty Martyrs) in Sapareva Banya, St. George in the neighbourhood of Gyurgevo, St. Bogoroditsa (Holy Virgin's) Church in the village of Saparevo, St. Ioan Bogoslov (St. John the Theologian's) Church in the village of Ovchartsii, and St. Nikolai in the village of Ressilovo. All of these churches are works of famous and not so famous master brick layers, wood-carvers and iconographers.

For those interested in Christian art it would be curious to visit the numerous preserved monasteries, chapels and consecrated grounds located to the south and southeast of Sapareva Banya and the nearby villages. These are Resilovo Monastery Pokrov Bogorodichen (The Shroud of the Virgin), the small monasteries St. Stephan and St. Archangel Michael), the chapels and consecrated grounds St. Bogoroditsa (Holy Virgin), St. Petka, St. Varvara, St. Todor, St. Peter, St. George and St. Ilyia.

What will impress the tourists are not only the well-preserved historical monuments in the Sapareva Banya region but also the well preserved and eagerly celebrated by the locals traditional religious festivities. Here the people annually celebrate the Kukeri masked ritual (a ritual to ensure the advent of spring and the hope for rich crops);



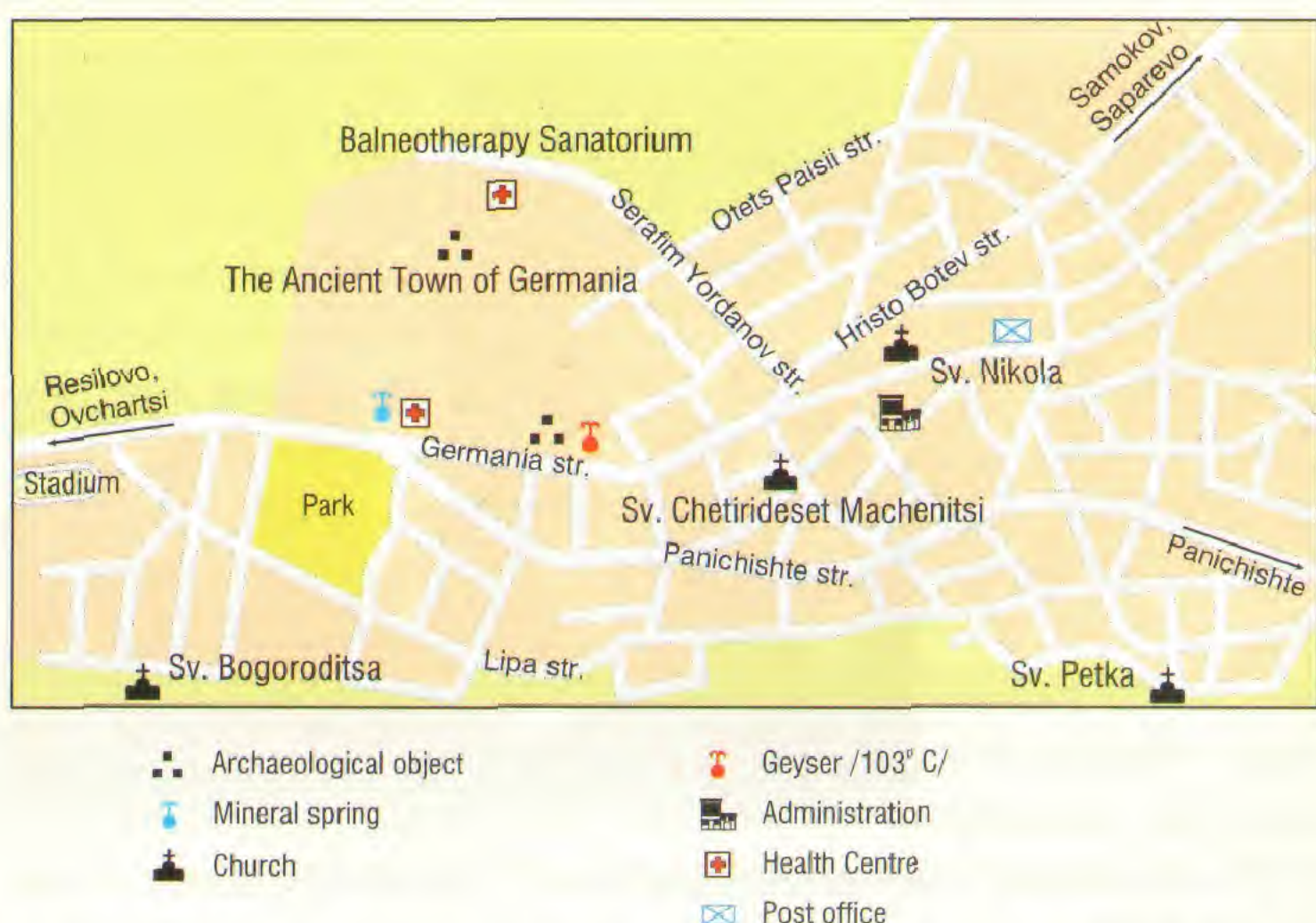
St. Todor's Day with horse racing. Traditional fairs on St. Bogoroditsa's Day (Holy Virgin's Day) and St. George's Day are also organized. On these days people cook and eat kurban (boiled mutton dish). Visitors are especially attracted



by the impressive local accent and the unique unforgettable traditional cuisine.

Sapareva Banya is a starting point of one of the most fascinating and popular tourist routes in the Rila Mountain. These routes pass by the resort Panichishte which offers excellent conditions for recreation all year round. The resort is tucked in a beautiful surrounding and provides excellent accommodation and ski tracks. With its cosmic grandeur, the area of Seven Rila Lakes has turned to be an open temple under the sky for the thousands of followers of the teacher Peter Danov, who come here from all over the world. Among the attractive places which these routes cover are also the Skakavitsa Hut, Lovna Hut, Vada Hut, Ivan Vazov Hut, the areas of Ezerishteto and Kolibite, Ovcharchenski waterfall, the river Goritsa, etc.





Sapareva Banya is located 750 m. above sea level at the foot of the Kabul section of South-west Rila Mountain, where the river Djerman flowing out of the crystal clear water of the Seven Rila Lakes goes along the flat and fertile area of Gorno Pole (Upper field) and flows into the Struma river.

The municipality of Sapareva Banya includes the villages of Saparevo, Ovchartsitsi and Resilovo. Its territory also includes the famous resort Panichishte, which is hidden in the heart of the Rila Mountain. Almost one-third of the municipality territory is within the borders of the National Park Rila. The town of Sapareva Banya is 80 km. to the south of Sofia, 15 km. to the east of Dupnitsa, which is on the international road E-79 Sofia - Kulata, and 54 km. away from the town of Kyustendil.





Legend

-  Monastery
-  Chapel
-  Church
-  Neolithic settlement
-  Geyser
-  Waterfall
-  Settlement
-  Tourist Information Centre

Monastery

- 1 Pokrov Bogorodichen
- 2 Sv. Stefan

Church

- 3 Sv. Nikola
- 4 Sv. Nikolai
- 5 Sv. Archangel Mihail
- 6 Sv. Chetirideset Machenitsi
- 7 Sv. Yoan Bogoslov
- 8 Sv. Georgi

Chapel

- 9 Sv. Bogoroditsa
- 10 Sv. Georgi

To reach Sapareva Banya by public transport you can catch the bus from the Ovcha Kupel bus station in Sofia, every day at 2 p.m. You can also catch a bus to Dupnitsa from the same bus station (buses leave every 1 hour and 50 minutes). Then you can transfer at the Dupnitsa bus station catching a bus to Sapareva Banya (buses leave every 30 minutes). You can catch a minibus or a taxi from the centre of Sapareva Banya in order to reach the resort Panichishte.

Visitor's Centre – Panichishte
for the National park "Rila"
tel.: + 359 707 / 33 02
www.culttourism-kn.bg

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District of Kyustendil